

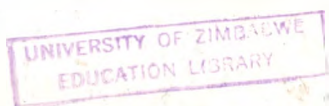
# ZJER

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## CONTENTS



**Effectiveness of the Blended Supervision model: A Case Study of Student Teachers learning to Teach in High Schools of Zimbabwe**

*C.T. Gadzirayi, B.C. Muropa and E. Mutandwa*

**Teaching Shona In English/Shona: Ideological Challenges And Implications- Whither UZ & MASU?**

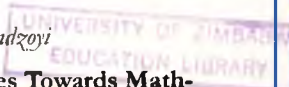
*E. Chapanga & R. Makamani*

**An Assessment of the Efficacy of the Tripartite Student Teacher Mentoring Scheme in Zimbabwe's Masvingo Region**

*E. Chauraya*

**XContinuity and progression in science curricula from the primary school to the secondary school in Masvingo District in Zimbabwe**

*P.V. Moyo and M.R. Nyikahadzoyi*



**Similarities and Differences in Attitudes Towards Mathematics among Form 3 pupils in Gweru urban Schools**

*M. Rvodzi*

**XAfricanising the School Curriculum: A Case for Zimbabwe**

*Pharao Joseph Marhunga*

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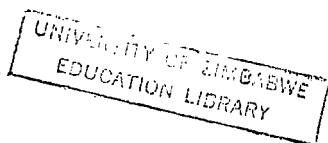
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## CONTENTS



Effectiveness of the Blended Supervision model: A Case Study of Student Teachers learning to Teach in High Schools of Zimbabwe

*C.T. Gadzirayi, B.C. Muropa and E. Mutandwa* ..... 371

Teaching Shona In English/Shona: Ideological Challenges And Implications-Whither UZ & MASUP

*E. Chapanga & R. Makamani* ..... 383

An Assessment of the Efficacy of the Tripartite Student Teacher Mentoring Scheme in Zimbabwe's Masvingo Region

*E. Chauraya* ..... 398

Continuity and progression in science curricula from the primary school to the secondary school in Masvingo District in Zimbabwe

*P.V. Moyo and M.R. Nyikabadzoyi* ..... 409

Similarities and Differences in Attitudes Towards Mathematics among Form 3 pupils in Gweru urban Schools

*M.Rwodzi* ..... 420

Africanising the School Curriculum: A Case for Zimbabwe

*Pharaoh Joseph Mavhunga* ..... 440

# AFRICANISING THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: A CASE FOR ZIMBABWE

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## Abstract

*This paper argues that the school curricula in post-colonial African states have remained largely irrelevant to the needs of indigenous people. In spite of the tinkering with the curricula after the attainment of political independence in the name of educational reform, the fundamentals seem to have remained intact. Hence, observations have been made that the education systems continue to churn out Africans deeply rooted in Western ideals, norms, values, beliefs and knowledge systems that alienate them from mainstream African ways of life; Africans who trek to Western capitals to provide cheap labour under near slave conditions that could best be described in Mungazi's (1991) words as 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. Among those that have remained at home, there has emerged an African elite that has been assimilated into Western ways of life. The products of the school systems in Africa today, it is argued, have no identity. They are neither African nor European. In Zimbabwe such youths are termed 'salads', meaning people of no identity. The same can be said of most other African countries that were subjected to colonialism in the past and neo-colonialism today, under the vague and obscure concept of globalisation. Against this background, this paper advocates for re-engineering of the school curriculum by incorporating some indigenous knowledge systems rooted in African culture that have proved to meet the needs of the Africans over time.*

## Introduction

After slavery, colonialism is known to be the greatest scourge ever to afflict the African continent, particularly in Southern Africa where its brunt was most felt. For more than a century, in some cases, African states were subjected to brutal systems of governance meted by those European countries that had colonised them. Zimbabwe, a former British colony, is a case in point. Zvobgo (1999:vii) laments;

Colonial rule created conditions of semi-slavery which rendered indigenous people aliens in their own land. Throughout the many decades of colonial rule in Africa, a situation was created in which the colonialists exercised complete control over all aspects of African life.

Zvobgo (1999) goes on to chronicle the nature of dominance that the colonialists exerted on indigenous Africans, describing the relationship as a 'master-servant' or 'horse-rider' relationship characterised by social, political and economic exploitation rooted in deep racism. This paper does not dwell on these aspects of colonial domination of Africans in detail, but focuses on how education, through a well-crafted curriculum, was used by colonialists as an instrument of domination, oppression, subjugation and exploitation of Africans.

While some people may argue that colonialism is no longer an issue in countries such as Zimbabwe that have been independent for a quarter of a century, this paper argues that the vestiges of colonialism continue to haunt former colonial states and, therefore, the issue remains topical.

Three fundamental questions guide the discussion in this paper:

- From a historical point of view, how did colonialism influence the nature of the school curricula in colonial states?
- Have there been any meaningful changes to the fundamentals of the school curricula in post-colonial Africa?
- As a way forward, how can the school curricula be re-engineered in order to meet the needs of post-colonial Africa, especially against a background of the new world order driven by the concept of globalisation?

To address these questions, among others, this paper takes a curriculum analysis approach.

### *Theoretical framework*

The business of curriculum is to overcome meaninglessness in any education system, hence the need to constantly subject the curriculum to some analysis. Curriculum planners need constant information feedback in order for them to

make important curriculum decisions, and such information is obtained through curriculum analysis. According to Maravanyika (1986) curriculum analysis is the process of gathering, analysing and interpreting curriculum information for the purpose of justifying its rationale with the view to facilitate its planning and development.

Discussing the same concept, Posner (1995) says curriculum analysis entails determining the extent to which the assumptions underlying the curriculum are valid for the particular class, school, district or nation. He goes on to say that such assumptions consist of beliefs about the central purpose of education, about the intended audience and the way people learn, about teachers and the best ways to teach, about the subject matter and how it should be organised. The essence of curriculum analysis, therefore is to constantly question the rationale of the curriculum leading to goal analysis, content analysis and, ultimately, intrinsic evaluation of the entire curriculum (Maravanyika 1986). The whole exercise of analysing a curriculum is done within the social, economic and political context of any given nation, guided by educational theory with the view to making the curriculum relevant to the needs of the particular society.

Basing on the views outlined above, this paper attempts an analysis of the school curricula of post-independent African states in general, and Zimbabwe in particular. The analysis is based on historical, sociological and philosophical antecedents that shaped the school curricula during the period under review in a bid to answer the question posed by Herbert Spencer (in Barrow 1976). What fundamental knowledge is of most worth? An analysis of antecedents that shaped curriculum practices in colonial Africa follows.

### *Colonialism and the school curriculum*

In order to understand the current state of education systems in general and the school curricula in particular in post independence African states, there is need to start by analysing some historical antecedents of the colonial era. The provision of education to Africans in colonial states was a combined effort of Christian Missionaries and colonial governments concerned. While the two institutions had different agendas, their ultimate goal was the same – extending Western influence in colonial states (Mungazi 1991). After all, is it not a known fact that Christian Missionaries opened up territories for eventual occupation by colonialists? While the greatest motivation for missionaries in providing Africans with education was to facilitate conversion of Africans from their 'pagan' beliefs

to Christianity, that of the colonialists was basically to subjugate, control and exploit the Africans. The education policies that ensued from such motivation were segregatory between Africans who were the ruled and Europeans who were the rulers, resulting in an inferior education system for the Africans with a carefully crafted curriculum that was meant to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of colonialism.

A look at Zimbabwe as a test case may help to appreciate the unfavourable circumstances surrounding the African education system during the colonial era. Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902) is regarded as the father figure whose vision and determination were chiefly responsible for bringing European settlement in the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1890. Rhodes was a rich Briton resident in South Africa whose wealth came from diamond mining in that country, itself a former colony. His vision and mission were to extend Anglo-Saxon influence north of the Limpopo via Zimbabwe so that the indigenous Africans could 'benefit' from Western civilisation brought to them by the 'finest' race on earth. In his bid to bring large parts of Africa under British control, Rhodes is cited in Atkinson (1972:5) as once having said;

I contend that we are the finest race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings, what an alteration there would be in them if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence.

The sentiments above underline the relationship between the colonialists (British) and the colonised (Africans) that ensued after colonisation. This socio-economic, cultural and political milieu provided the basis upon which racist policies were developed for the Africans in all spheres of life. Education was especially targeted as it was to be used as the instrument through which the Anglo-Saxon or Western influence was to be realised. The 'finest race' set itself the task of civilising the 'despicable specimens of human beings', the Africans who were indigenous to Zimbabwe. This supremacist attitude by the Europeans gave rise to the racial ideology that it was a God-given natural order of things that the Europeans should dominate the Africans (Zvobgo 1994:7).

Against the backdrop of such a racist ideology emerged a dual system of education, one for the ruling European class and another for the subjugated Africans. The curriculum for the Europeans was designed in such a way that it

had to develop future leaders in commerce, industry and in Government. It was supposed to develop a rational mind that, according to Plato's words, was to be endowed with wisdom so that the rulers would avoid making 'errors of judgement'. The education system had to provide European children with wisdom to make them effective future rulers over Africans. The curriculum was designed in such a way that it developed an elite European ruling class among the recipients; a class that looked down upon Africans and a class that was capable of exploiting the African to the fullest.

Cecil Rhodes, the architect of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) went further to put in place a scholarship that was largely meant to develop an elitist European ruling class. Outlining the qualities of scholars that would qualify for the scholarship, Rhodes wrote;

Regard shall be had not only for his literacy and scholastic attainments, but also to his character and social qualities. Moreover, no student shall be elected unless he shall be moderately fond of outdoor sports such as cricket, football and the like (Artkinson 1972:6).

Rhodes went further to explicitly point out that the idea was to promote the development of future (European) leaders, particularly for colonial states such as Zimbabwe. The curriculum that was developed for that purpose was of an academic nature which emphasised Western values. The literature that was prescribed was carefully chosen to propagate such values, so were the games such as cricket.

Having looked at the curriculum for the European children in colonial Africa in general and in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in particular, a look at the African side of the dual system of education follows. It should be pointed out that in colonial Zimbabwe racial segregation was institutionalised and legislated for. There were two separate Departments of education catering for the two races. The funding of education was highly skewed in favour of the European child. Siyakhwazi (1996:21) notes, "Ten times was spent on a European child than on an African child". The statement above sets the general tone in terms of how the colonial government viewed African education.

As mentioned earlier, African education was purposefully designed as a colonial instrument to make African children fit certain moulds in order to perform roles and tasks for the colonial administrators and the settlers. The school curriculum



was meant to develop the African children into "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the colonial masters (Mungazi 1991; Siyakhwazi 1996: 27). It was the coloniser who determined what the colonised had to learn. The coloniser determined the African child's fate and indeed what Plato termed his 'station in life', that of a perpetual servant. In order to develop such a product, the curriculum emphasised the training of the African child in basic menial skills particularly in agriculture. The argument was that African education was to be of a utilitarian value to the coloniser, hence African children were to be trained in industry and agriculture in order to produce for the European coloniser (Siyakhwazi 1996).

The chief architect and proponent of the curriculum outlined above was H.S. Keigwin who was the Director of African Education in colonial Zimbabwe from 1918 to 1926. His idea of a relevant curriculum for Africans was one that provided them with skills that made them efficient servants to the European master (Zvobgo 1986). The curriculum was supposed to develop in the African child the values of industry, diligence, cleanliness and obedience. They were supposed to be docile citizens that did not challenge the status-quo.

On the other hand, Christian values that were being promoted by Missionaries through the curriculum they offered in their schools also complemented government values. The curriculum was basically made up of Scripture studies, basic reading, basic numeracy and many hours of industrial training. Berman (in Siyakhwazi 1996:16) summed it up thus, "...one might see that emphasis was placed on education for African masses which was to be simple, utilitarian and rooted in strong agricultural bias". As far as academic education was concerned, Keigwin saw it 'unsuitable' for Africans. He argued that it would create lazy Africans, ones he described as 'educated vagabonds' (Zvobgo 1994:17). Yet, the real concern was that academic education would enlighten the African who would end up challenging the European for political and economic control.

So, the history of African education in colonial Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe, shows a picture in which the school curriculum peddled European values; where indigenous languages were looked down upon in preference for English and other European languages. African religions were described as pagan and backward. Their practice was castigated in support of Christianity which also brought with it European values and etiquette. African children were taught European history and not their own as if they had none. Albert Memm (cited in Siyakhwazi 1996:14) once wrote;

The history which is taught him (the African) is not his own. Everything seems to have taken place out of his country.... The books talk to him of a world in no way that reminds him of his own.

Sikakwazi (1996) goes on to say that even the geography they were taught was the geography of foreign lands and very little of theirs.

The situation described above shows that there was total disregard of indigenous knowledge systems in the school curricula for Africans during the colonial era. As alluded to earlier, this was meant to produce an African who looked down upon his own cultural beliefs and everything else that was African, including indigenous languages and religion. The educated African was supposed to appreciate his master's Western cultural values that he was supposed to emulate, uphold and promote. He/she was supposed to be forever grateful to the 'superior race' for bringing him civilisation, and to show appreciation through unquestioned loyalty and obedience to the European master. This, the education system achieved except for a few dissenting voices particularly from those Africans that had ventured to South Africa where the education system for Africans was somewhat liberal. (The majority of nationalists who spearheaded the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe received their education from South Africa.) It can be concluded, therefore, that the curricula offered the Africans during the colonial era were largely irrelevant to the needs of the African recipients of education during that era.

### *The post-independence school curriculum*

Having looked at the historical antecedents that shaped the school curricula in colonial Africa, the paper now looks at whether the forces that shaped the curriculum then have changed, especially now that almost all African states have become independent. Also of interest is whether there have been meaningful changes to the school curricula in post independence Africa. In other words, have there been any major shifts in curriculum practice in order to redress the identified imbalances of the colonial era?

Upon attainment of independence, the new African governments attempted many changes in the political, economic and social spheres in an attempt to redress colonial imbalances described above. In Zimbabwe for example, one area that received particular attention was education. Though attempts were made to reform the education systems in general, and the curriculum in particular in

order to ensure relevance to the African needs in post-independence states, most researches indicate that not much was achieved. Zvobgo (1999:ix) wrote:

The post- colonial periods in the history of Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, like those of other Third World countries, represented periods of great hope and expectations, visionary dreams and exuberant optimism among planners and managers of educational systems and the general public. Barely two decades later, in the 1990s, the mood is at best one of guarded optimism. At worst, it is one of pessimism and despair as the countries sink deeper into debt crises of unprecedented proportions.

The clear implication of the statement above is that educational reform in post-colonial Africa has not quite succeeded. One of the reasons is that educational reform is tied to economic reform. Generally speaking, it is an acknowledged fact that former colonial powers have not relinquished social, economic and political control over former colonial states, leading to a new form of colonialism referred to as neo-colonialism. Any attempts by a former colonial state to take full control over the above mentioned facets of life attract a variety of retributive measures. That way, any reforms (including educational) considered unsuitable by the former colonial powers have tended to be kept under check.

One major mistake made by post-independence governments in Africa was succinctly presented by (Zvobgo 1999:xi) who wrote:

Western models of education were imported by the new states in the belief that they only had to Westernise their education systems in order to modernise their societies and so become industrialised and rich.

The use of western models alluded to above was reinforced by Western consultants who come in droves to advise newly independent states on some bilateral agreements with former colonial states and their allies. Educational reforms, including curricula reforms that emerged from such arrangements ended up further entrenching Western values in the guise of 'modernising' education systems. In Zimbabwe for instance, despite well- documented plans to localise the curriculum by adopting indigenous values and technologies, of course tempered with technological developments from the world over, the school curriculum has fundamentally remained Western. A simple example is that the language of the former colonial master, namely English, has remained the medium of instruction in the public and private schools. It remains the language of the office. Further more, the 'O' level school-leaving certificate cannot be

complete unless one passes at least five subjects, including English of course. The indigenous languages namely Shona and Ndebele are not accorded similar respect in the school curriculum.

Related to the issue of language is that of culture. In Zimbabwe today there is a public outcry that the education system is producing uncultured products (*vana vasina hunhu*) (Report of the Presidential Commission of Enquiry into Education and Training 1999; Sunday Mail 26 February 2006). The heavy influence of Western values is noted in the manner of dressing, etiquette and general deportment among the youth. In 2003 the country was hit by high level corruption cases in the financial sector executed the 'western style' by young graduates from the country's education system, driven by greed. Such practices are un-African. Typical African culture, according to Gelfand (1973) abhors such practices as greed, selfishness and corruption in general which the education system seems to be promoting through emphasis of Western capitalist values.

Another example from the Zimbabwean school curriculum is the subject History. As pointed out earlier, the History taught in Zimbabwean schools prior to independence had a Western outlook. Where African history, including Zimbabwean history was taught, the African was presented negatively. Although notable changes to the History Syllabus were made in post independence Zimbabwe with the introduction of syllabus 2166 in 1990 which was later replaced by syllabus 2167 in 2002, some pockets of resistance to the new History content that emphasises Zimbabwean history, particularly that of the liberation struggle, have been noted. For example, Vengesayi (cited in Chitape 2005) noted some resistance to the new History syllabus 2166 by some missionary and private schools due to the socialist thrust taken then. The move taken by the Minister of Education Sport and Culture to include History as one of the core subjects in the secondary school curriculum has also attracted some criticism from various quarters that seem uncomfortable with the Zimbabwean thrust that has been introduced in the subject.

Also, it can be argued that the teachers of the new History are, themselves, products of the old History that portrayed the European as the hero and the African as the villain in the majority of cases where the two races encountered one another. Is it any wonder, therefore, that the product of education systems in Africa, particularly in former colonies, Zimbabwe being a case in point, still continues to look down upon his/her own history; his/her own language; his/her own culture as a whole? The curriculum, therefore, even twenty-five years after

independence in the case of Zimbabwe, is seen as having barely addressed African needs and has not been quite related to African experiences and background. Siyakwazi (1996:15) aptly puts it as follows:

The problem of the African school system is that it originated in a European environment that was alien to the African people and divorced from African daily life and in this way failed to prepare the African youth for life within an African environment.

So, while colonial education was devised to strengthen the service of Africa to Europe through a well-crafted curriculum for that purpose, the situation still remains largely intact, as exemplified above. Africans have continued to imbibe Western values through the curriculum on offer. The situation in Zimbabwe has been aggravated by the advent of private schools that were set up after independence by rich 'whites' who sought to remove their children from public schools that had been opened up to African children. These private schools have been accused of charging exorbitant fees as a discrimination device against Africans who largely cannot afford. The few African children who access such schools because either their parents can afford the fees, or the companies they work for can pay fees for their children, tend to be initiated into Western culture through a well orchestrated 'hidden curriculum', to the extent that some argue that what is African about them is only their skin colour while the rest is European, a situation that can best be described as cultural imperialism.

From the picture portrayed above, it can be argued that the colonial education curricula, which have largely remained intact despite some tinkering with them in the post-independence educational reform, continue to promote and perpetuate European cultural hegemony. The dislocation of the African traditions and cultural set-ups has continued unabated, leading to unprecedented disintegration of African societies. This, therefore, calls for a re-look at the school curricula with the view to *Africanising* them as an attempt to redress the situation.

### ***Africanising of the school curriculum as a way forward***

The discussion above has presented challenges relating to the relevance and worthwhileness of curriculum fundamentals in post-colonial Africa. The question that needs to be addressed is, how can the curricula be re-engineered in order to ensure relevance to the needs of post-colonial Africa? This paper suggests *Africanising* the school curriculum as a way forward, a view shared by Adesoji (2003).

The Phelps – Stokes Commission Report of 1924 contains some wisdom which can be used today. The report, cited by Siyakhwazi (1995), warned that the artificiality and irrelevant elements of the content of a school curriculum that originated in distant parts of the world tended to confuse the mind of the African youth. For instance, the Commission report questioned then, why the African youth was expected to sing the 'British Grenadiers' and the 'Marseillaise', and ignore the music of his people. "Why should the history and geography of Europe and America receive more attention than that of Africa itself?" the Commission report asked (Siyakhwazi 1995:13). These were important and legitimate questions then, and so do they remain today. If any justification for *Africanising* the school curricula was needed, the above statement provides it. The only question, probably, is how to go about it.

Lawton (1975), a renowned curriculum expert, posits that any curriculum that is deemed relevant should essentially be based on a selection from a people's culture, certain aspects of their way of life, certain kinds of knowledge, certain attitudes and values. Africa has its own cultures and its own indigenous knowledge and technological systems that can form the bases for *Africanising* of the school curriculum. *Africanising* the school curriculum, according to this paper, simply means making the curriculum meet the needs, interests and aspirations of the African people as determined by the Africans themselves. Julian Kunnie (1998) boldly declares that it is now universally accepted, after centuries of European colonial conjecture and refutation that the first human civilizations originated in Africa. He further declares that Africa is the mother of all civilization. Along the same lines, Gelfand (1973) talks of the rich beauty of the Shona (African) ethical code that, according to him, stands in sharp contrast to the material individualism of the West. That being the case, any worthwhile African curriculum should take into account these facts.

The paper suggests some critical areas that need to be attended to in the spirit of *Africanising* the curriculum, the first one being the crafting of national educational philosophies encapsulating African cultural values. For any education system to produce a product that the nation will be proud of, the curriculum that communicates the desired knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and attitudes should be guided by a well-defined educational philosophy that is home grown. The Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (1999) pointed out that the Zimbabwean education system was operating without such a philosophy. The Commission defined education as essentially an induction into culture and cultural norms that interpreted life, that guided human relationships and behaviours, in addition to passing on skills for survival.

Basing on the definition of education above, the Commission went on to suggest the philosophy of unhu/ubuntu, rooted in African culture, characterised by qualities such as "responsibility, honesty, justice, trustworthiness, hard work, integrity, a cooperative spirit, solidarity, devotion to family and the welfare of the community" (Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999:62). These attributes are the basis of what could distinguish a Zimbabwean from any other national, provided they are interpreted from African metaphysical and axiological perspectives, and this should form the philosophical basis for *Africanising* the school curriculum. A school product with unhu/ubuntu should be able to fit into the Zimbabwean society well, as well as interacting with people from other nations without feeling inadequate or inferior as seems to be the case at present. Adesoji (2003:56) shares the same view and sums it up as follows;

—it is only nations, deeply steeped in their national cultures and with firmly established educational policies and structures for national well being that can contribute meaningfully to the dialogue between nations. The dialogue must be based on mutual respect and a partnership for the common good.

Against this background, there are some subject areas and disciplines in the school curriculum that need to be *Africanised* in order to address epistemological concerns within the framework of the philosophy proposed above. One such subject is History.

As mentioned earlier, the history that was taught to African children during and soon after the colonial era was largely European. Where African history was taught, the intention was largely to denigrate the African and to exalt the place of the European within the set-up. One example given by Kunnie (1998) is the history of the Great Zimbabwe, which he described as one of the most awesome and fascinating historical monuments in Africa. Many History books written by European scholars try to credit the construction of the Great Zimbabwe to foreigners of a European origin, yet evidence is in abundance that the builders were indigenous Africans of Zimbabwe. Of late some African scholars have embarked on writing History textbooks that attempt to correct colonial distortions of historical facts such as the above. This example shows the importance of researching African history from an African perspective so that the school curriculum can carry a truly African history for the consumption of the African pupil. People who do not know their past do not understand who they are and, therefore, cannot chart the way for their future.

Another contentious issue in African history is on how the continent was liberated from colonial rule. In Zimbabwe, for example, literature from Western writers on how the country attained independence suggests that independence was achieved through the Lancaster House Conference of 1979 held in Britain, which brought together the warring parties. Yet, the truth is that the Rhodesian government led by Ian Smith and supported by Britain and its Western allies was defeated by African liberation armies on the war front. The Lancaster House Conference was a result of the capitulation of the Rhodesian government. History books should bring out this fact unequivocally. Similarly should the history of the liberation struggles in other countries such as Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa and Namibia, to name just a few examples, be treated. Through History in the school curriculum, African children should be taught that their continent was once colonised by Europeans and Africans had to liberate themselves through protracted wars of liberation. This is a true historical antecedent which should be chronicled and studied with 'African pride'.

The other area that calls for *Africanising* within the school curriculum is that of language. The languages of instruction in schools in most African countries, as indeed the official languages, remain those of the former colonisers. Sociologists argue that a language is the medium of cultural values and norms transmission and for the creation of a national identity (Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999). In Zimbabwe, for example, English is the medium of instruction and the language of the office as alluded to earlier on. Would it be wrong, therefore, to argue that through English as a language of communication and instruction in our schools, English values are passed on to African children? Is it any wonder also that 'educated' Zimbabweans seem to be more comfortable conversing in English than they are with indigenous languages which they tend to look down upon?

As part of the *Africanising* process, ChiShona and IsiNdebele should be accorded national and official language status in Zimbabwe for a start and should be the medium of instruction in schools where the majority of the learners speak these languages as is the practice in Britain, France, Germany, China, Japan, Russia etc where languages that are indigenous to those countries are used for instruction in schools. After all, research has proved that concept formation is best achieved if one is taught in one's first language. The so-called international languages such as English, French and Portuguese can be taught as subjects in the school curriculum like any other subject. This way, African norms, values and identity can be emphasised.



The same can be done with Religious Education. As pointed out earlier, colonialism brought with it Christianity whose teachings are based on the bible. This religion was 'imposed' on Africans who had their own religion. An analysis of syllabuses in Zimbabwean schools today shows that Christianity and the Bible are taught in the schools under Religious Education at the expense of all other religions. Africans are a deeply religious people and religion is at the core of their cultural practices as testified by Gelfand (1973). As such, religion should be studied from an African perspective, other religions coming in for purposes of understanding other people's spirituality. Perhaps African gods should be accessed through the medium of African religion, one might argue.

Further, African curriculum experts can carry out research in other crucial areas, such as African sciences, technologies and agricultural practices with the view to incorporating them in the school curriculum because these are indigenous to Africa and, therefore, best suited to the continent's situation. Kunnie (1998) talks about the unequivocal scientific character of indigenous African knowledge, quite pronounced in Egypt, yet extant in various regions of the continent. As opposed to viewing African knowledge systems as primitive and superstitious, modern science which is largely viewed as Western, should re-examine its biased and prejudicial disposition because 'African Science' formed the basis for modern science and may have relevance in addressing modern medical challenges such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Kunnie 1998). The recent discovery by a Zimbabwean scientist at the University of Zimbabwe of *gundamiti*, a drug with potential to cure AIDS is a good example.

The same can be done in the area of technology. For example, instead of using Western roofing tiles which are not quite suited to tropical wet and hot climatic conditions, scientific research should focus on perfecting the grass-thatch roofing technology which is better suited to local conditions, cheaper and more friendly to the environment. The material, namely grass, is renewable and non-hazardous to human health compared to asbestos widely used at the moment. In short, the science and technology that is included in the school curriculum should take a well-researched African slant.

Many more examples can be cited where the school curriculum begs for *Africanising*, such as in the areas of visual and fine arts, music and dances, sport, to name just a few, all in a bid to ensure relevance. The rebranding of Masvingo State University to focus on research into and teaching of Zimbabwean culture is a step in the right direction and this should go a long way influencing

the cultural component within school curricula. Maravanyika (1982) sums it up thus; "What is needed is a curriculum that puts the African and his cosmology or ontology at the centre," in other words, *Africanising* the school curriculum.

The suggestions given above for continued refocusing of the school curricula in post-independence Africa do not advocate for African countries to come up with an 'ecological' curriculum that might render products from their education systems non-functional in the 'global village'. Rather, the thrust is that while taking into account developments in science, technology and other spheres of human endeavour the world over, their introduction into the school curricula should be done within an African context. Research in all fields of study should recognise and take into account indigenous knowledge systems, history and fundamental cultural values. Culture is known to be dynamic, but central values that give a nation its identity should be preserved.

## Conclusion

The main argument of this paper has been that the curricula in schools in post-colonial states have continued to peddle values and knowledge systems of former colonisers, thereby rendering them largely irrelevant to the African cause. As a result, the school system is accused of breeding apologists to Western hegemony, products that look up to Europe for solutions to local problems rather than independent thinkers who seek African solutions to African problems; people who have no cultural base and, therefore, no identity. This tends to result in lack of self-confidence and self-respect among products of African education systems (*vanhu vasina hunhu*). The solution to this problem, this paper suggests, lies in a concerted effort to truly *Africanise* the school curriculum at all levels.

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